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ABSTRACT

Despite the growing interest in the care of children younger than age 3, there is little national information available on their current child care arrangements. This study used data from the National Survey of America's Families on the types of care, hours in care, and the number of nonparental arrangements for under-age-3 children of working mothers. The study also examined how aspects of care differ depending on characteristics of the children and families. The study found that 73 percent of infants and toddlers of employed mothers were cared for primarily by a nonparent during the mothers' working hours: 27 percent by relatives, 22 percent center care, 17 percent family care, and 7 percent nannies/babysitters. Thirty-nine percent were in care full-time. Type of care varied according to the age and race/ethnicity of the child. Center care was more common among children of more highly educated mothers. Center care also was used more often for children of higher-income families than for children of low-income families. Relative care was most common for low-income families. Children of single parents were more likely than two-parent families to rely on relatives for care. More children of single parents than two-parent families were in care

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full-time, as well. Types of care used differed depending on the amount of time parents had available. Time in nonparental care declined dramatically as parent availability increased. Twenty-seven percent of children were cared for primarily by a relative, with 51 percent of these children in multichild settings. Data tables are appended. (Contains 11 references.) (KB)

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Who's Caring for Our Youngest Children? Child Care Patterns of Infants and Toddlers

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Occasional Paper Number 12

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Assessing the New Federalism
An Urban Institute Program to Assess Changing Social Policies

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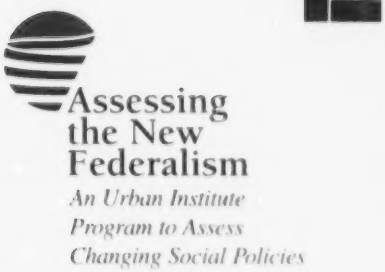

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This paper is part of the Urban Institute's *Assessing the New Federalism* (ANF) project, a multiyear effort to monitor and assess the devolution of social programs from the federal to the state and local levels. Alan Weil is the project director. The project analyzes changes in income support, social services, and health programs. In collaboration with Child Trends, the project studies child and family well-being.

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About the Series

Assessing the New Federalism is a multiyear Urban Institute project designed to analyze the devolution of responsibility for social programs from the federal government to the states, focusing primarily on health care, income security, employment and training programs, and social services. Researchers monitor program changes and fiscal developments. In collaboration with Child Trends, the project studies changes in family well-being. The project aims to provide timely, nonpartisan information to inform public debate and to help state and local decisionmakers carry out their new responsibilities more effectively.

Key components of the project include a household survey, studies of policies in 13 states, and a database with information on all states and the District of Columbia, available at the Urban Institute's Web site (http://www.urban.org). This paper is one in a series of occasional papers analyzing information from these and other sources.

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Executive Summary

Child care of children younger than age 3 has become an issue of increasing public focus. This is due, at least in part, to the recognition that millions of American parents are working during their children's early years. The interest also stems from the growing body of research showing how important the earliest years are in setting a strong foundation for children's future learning and success (Shore 1997). This research has helped spur various policy initiatives that focus on child care for this age group—including initiatives to improve the quality of child care and to provide comprehensive early childhood services, for example, the Early Head Start program.

Despite this interest, not much information has been widely available to provide a national overview of the care and education arrangements of children younger than age 3 with working mothers. This study uses the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF) to present national findings on the types of care, hours in care, and the numbers of child care arrangements used for children under age 3 of working mothers. This paper also looks at how these aspects of care differ depending on characteristics of the children and families. Because of the frequent use of relative care settings for this age group, we also offer an in-depth view of some key characteristics of these arrangements.

Data and Methods

This paper uses 1997 NSAF data to look at the child care patterns of children under age 3 of working mothers in the United States. We examine three aspects of care—*types of care*, *hours in care*, and *the number of nonparental arrangements*. For the *type of care*, we focus on the care arrangement in which the child spends the most number of hours while the mother is at work—the "primary" care arrangement. Five types of primary arrangements are discussed: center-based care, family child care (care by a non-relative in the provider's home), baby-sitter or nanny care, relative care, and parent care. For the *hours in care*, we look at the percentages of children in full-time nonparental care (defined as those in care for 35 hours or more a week) and the average hours children spend in nonparental care. Finally, for the *number of non-*

parental arrangements, we look at the percentages of children in two or more arrangements each week. We then examine how these aspects of care vary for different subgroups of this population based on the child's age and race, the mother's education, family structure and income, and parent availability.

These data provide valuable information on the choices that families make about the care and education of their youngest children. They do not, however, provide information about the extent to which these choices are made due to parental preferences or constraints, nor do they suggest that membership in a particular demographic subgroup accounts for the variation in patterns.

Findings

Child Care Patterns of All Infants and Toddlers of Employed Mothers

- Seventy-three percent of infants and toddlers of employed mothers are primarily cared for by someone other than a parent while their mother is working.
- Twenty-seven percent are cared for by relatives; 22 percent are cared for in centers; 17 percent are cared for in family child care settings; and 7 percent are in the care of nannies or baby-sitters.
- Thirty-nine percent of infants and toddlers of employed mothers are in care full-time. The average time in nonparental care per week for infants and toddlers of employed mothers is 25 hours.
- Thirty-four percent of infants and toddlers of working mothers are in two or more nonparental arrangements.

Child Care Patterns of Infants and Toddlers with Different Characteristics

Different Ages

- Center care increases for young children of working mothers between infancy (under one year of age) and two years of age (15 versus 27 percent). Relative and parent care decrease for young children between infancy and two years of age (32 versus 23 percent for relative care and 33 versus 26 percent for parent care).
- The use of full-time nonparental care increases between infancy (under one year of age) and two years of age (32 versus 43 percent).
- Placement in two or more nonparental arrangements increases between infancy (under one year of age) and two years of age (28 versus 38 percent).

Different Racial and Ethnic Backgrounds

- Center care is more common for black and white children with working mothers than for Hispanic children (30 percent for blacks, 24 percent for whites, and

10 percent for Hispanics). Yet relative care is more common for Hispanic compared with black and white children (39 percent for Hispanics, 27 percent for blacks, and 25 percent for whites). Use of parent care does not differ depending on racial and ethnic background.

- Black children with working mothers are more likely to be in care full-time than are white and Hispanic children (58 percent for black children, 36 percent for white children, and 34 percent for Hispanic children).

Differences by Mother's Education

- Center care is more common among children of more highly educated mothers, increasing from 6 percent of children with mothers with less than a high school diploma to 27 percent of children with mothers with a college degree. Relative care is much less common among young children of more highly educated mothers, with the proportion of children in relative care decreasing from 50 percent of children with mothers with less than a high school diploma to 16 percent of children of mothers with a college degree. The use of parent care while the mother worked does not differ depending on education.
- The hours young children of working mothers spend in care each week do not differ depending on the education of the mother.
- Spending time in two or more arrangements is more common for children of mothers with high school diplomas or college degrees. Thirty-five percent of children of parents with a high school diploma and 34 percent of those whose mothers have a college degree fall into this category, compared with only 21 percent of children of parents with less than a high school diploma.

Differences by Family Income

- Use of different types of care varies when looking at three income groups: poor families (incomes less than 100 percent of the federal poverty level [FPL]), low-income families (incomes between 100 and 200 percent of FPL), and higher-income families (incomes above 200 percent of FPL). Center care is used more commonly for the children of higher-income families compared with children from low-income families. Relative care is most common for low-income families, with 39 percent of these children in this type of care, in contrast with 28 percent of poor families and 23 percent of higher-income families. The use of parent care does not differ depending on income.
- Infants and toddlers of working mothers spend more time in nonparental care as family income increases. Young children in poor families spend an average of 21 hours a week in care, compared with children in higher-income families who spend 26 hours a week in care.

Differences by Family Structure

- Children of single- and two-parent families use center-based care at similar levels (26 and 22 percent). However, children of single parents are more likely than

two-parent families to rely on relatives (38 versus 24 percent) and less likely to rely on parent care (13 versus 31 percent).

- Young children of single parents spend more time in nonparental care than young children of two-parent families. On average, infants and toddlers of single parents are in care for more hours per week (34 versus 23 hours). More young children of single parents are in care full-time (60 versus 34 percent).

Differences by Parent Availability

- The types of care used differ depending on the amount of time parents have available. Use of center care is more common among parents with less time available, decreasing from 26 percent of children with one parent working full-time to 13 percent of children in two-parent, partially employed families. Reliance on parent care is more common among parents with more time available, increasing from 10 percent of children with one parent working full-time to 44 percent of children in two-parent, partially employed families.
- Time in nonparental care declines dramatically as parent availability increases. Young children of parents with the least time available—single parents working full-time—spend an average of 35 hours per week in nonparental care; 67 percent are in care full-time. In contrast, children of parents with the most time available—two-parent, partially employed families—spend an average of 13 hours a week in nonparental care, with only 10 percent in care full-time.

Child Care Patterns for Children in Relative Care

- Twenty-seven percent of all infants and toddlers of employed mothers are being cared for primarily by a relative. This type of care is of interest to policymakers as states are increasingly providing public child care subsidy funds to help families pay for informal child care arrangements, such as relative care. Yet information on the characteristics and quality of these arrangements is minimal.
- Fifty-one percent of infants and toddlers in relative arrangements are cared for with at least one additional child. These multichild settings are more common for children cared for in a relative's home compared with children cared for in their own homes (59 versus 39 percent) and for children cared for in their own homes from lower-income families compared with children from higher-income families (49 versus 31 percent).
- Ninety-six percent of children in relative care are cared for by a provider 18 years of age or older.
- For 45 percent of infants and toddlers cared for in their own homes by a relative, the relative provider also lives with the family.

Who's Caring for Our Youngest Children? Child Care Patterns of Infants and Toddlers

Introduction

The care and education of children younger than age 3 has become an issue of increasing public focus in recent years. This is a result, at least in part, of the growing recognition that millions of American parents are working during their children's early years. In 1997, for example, the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF) found that 55 percent of mothers with a child younger than age 3 were employed. The 1996 federal welfare legislation added further impetus to this trend by requiring that low-income mothers on welfare with young children participate in job training programs and seek employment in order to continue receiving benefits.[1]

The interest in the care of this age group also stems from the growing body of research showing the importance of the earliest years in setting a strong foundation for children's future learning and success (Shore 1997). This research has helped to spur various policy initiatives that focus on child care for this age group, including initiatives to improve the quality of child care and to provide comprehensive early childhood services—for example, the Early Head Start program.

Despite this interest, very little information has been widely available to provide a national overview of the care and education arrangements of children younger than age 3 with working mothers. This study uses the 1997 NSAF to explore how child care arrangements vary for children and families with a range of different characteristics. In particular, this paper answers some of the most basic questions: What kinds of care do different families use for their youngest children? How long are these children in care? How many arrangements do they use? The answers to these questions

can inform the development of policies and programs for the nation's youngest children and their families.

Examining Child Care Arrangements for Young Children

The Data

This paper uses the 1997 NSAF to look at the child care patterns of young children in the United States.[2] That survey found that in 1997 there were 11.6 million children under age 3. Of these children, 6.7 million, or 58 percent, lived with an employed primary caretaker—which this paper refers to as "mother" for purposes of simplicity.[3] A closer look at these children shows that their characteristics differ somewhat from those of children whose mothers are not employed. Specifically, infants and toddlers with employed mothers are more likely to live in families with higher incomes and to have mothers with higher levels of education, and they are less likely to be minorities. These children are also slightly less likely to live in a home with a single mother (table A1).

This Paper

This paper examines three aspects of care for all infants and toddlers with employed mothers—the types of care, the hours in care, and the number of arrangements involving someone other than a parent. It then looks at how these aspects of care vary for different subgroups of this population—groupings that relate to the child's age and race, the mother's education, the family structure and income, and the availability of parents. Finally, because relative care is the primary form of care for many of the children in this age group, the paper looks in depth at some of the key characteristics of these relative child care arrangements. Figures throughout the text highlight key findings. Complete tables with estimates, standard errors, and sample sizes are provided in the appendix.

First, the paper examines the *types of child care* used for young children, focusing on the care arrangement in which the child spends the most hours while the mother is at work (called the "primary" care arrangement in this paper).[4] The paper identifies the following five types of primary care arrangements:

- *Center-based child care*, which includes child care centers, Head Start, preschool, prekindergarten, and before- or after-school programs.
- *Family child care*, which is care by a non-relative in the care provider's home.
- *Baby-sitter or nanny care*, which is care by a non-relative in the child's home.
- *Relative care*, which is care by a relative in either the child's or the relative's home.
- *Parent care*, which is care for children whose mother did not report a non-parental arrangement while she worked.[5]

Second, the paper provides information on the *hours* young children spend in nonparental care. Research has found that the hours a child spends in care, especially when combined with such factors as family characteristics and the quality of care used, can affect a child's social and cognitive development (NICHD 1998). The paper examines the percentages of children in full-time care (defined as those in care for 35 hours a week or more). It also examines the average hours children spend in nonparental care and, where possible, average hours in particular kinds of care.[6]

Third, the paper looks at the *number of nonparental arrangements* used for infants and toddlers—in particular, the percentages of children in two or more arrangements each week.[7] While it is not possible to determine whether the use of multiple arrangements as defined in this survey is detrimental to children's development,[8] the paper does provide insights into what parents are doing in their efforts to balance employment and child rearing, and also into the experiences of the infants and toddlers themselves.

Understanding the Data

Three issues are important to understand when reading this paper. First, these data provide valuable information on the choices that families make about the care and education of their youngest children. They do not provide information, though, about the extent to which these choices are made as a result of parental preferences (i.e., because parents are able to use the kind of care they prefer) or parental constraints (i.e., because parents cannot afford or find the care they want). It is clear that choice is a complex process and a blend of preferences, various constraints (cost, quality, supply, transportation), convenience, and access to relatives or other family caregivers.

Second, while the paper provides information on a number of family characteristics such as income, education, and race, it is also important to recognize that these factors are closely interrelated and that child care utilization patterns are likely to be influenced by a multitude of demographic factors simultaneously. For instance, the type of care a parent selects for the child may be simultaneously affected by the child's age, what type of care the family can afford, parents' work hours and employment status, and whether another parent is available to help provide care—as well as other factors not examined here, such as supply of care.

Third, the paper presents findings on the types of arrangements being used to care for young children, but it does not assess the quality of the care provided. The kinds of observational data needed for an adequate discussion of the quality of care environments are not available in the NSAF because it is a telephone survey of households.

Therefore, this paper provides only a preliminary picture of a number of key factors and patterns of child care for the nation's youngest children. Future research will explore further the specific factors that predict child care patterns for infants and toddlers and the roles of preferences and constraints in shaping parents' choices.

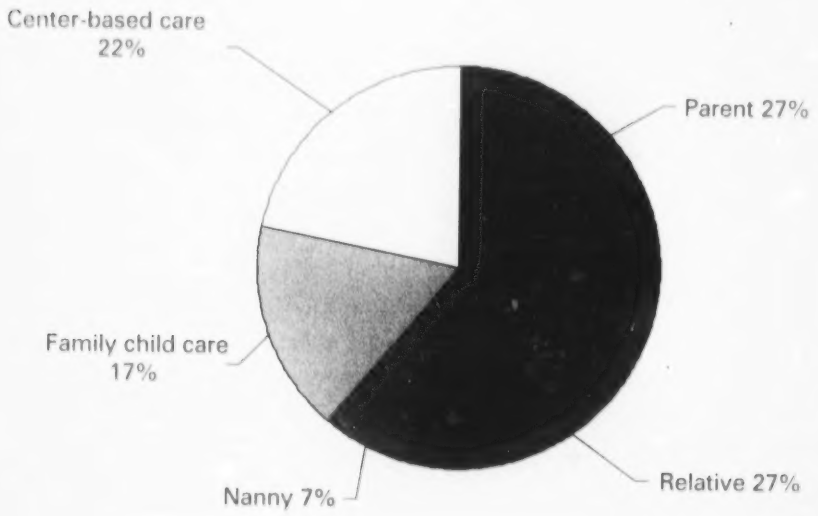
How Young Children of Employed Mothers Are Being Cared For

Almost three-quarters of infants and toddlers of employed mothers are primarily cared for by someone other than a parent while their mother is working (table A2). Specifically, 22 percent of young children are cared for in center-based care and 17 percent are cared for in family child care settings (care by a non-relative in the care provider's home) (figure 1). Seven percent of infants and toddlers are being cared for by nannies or baby-sitters, and 27 percent are in the care of relatives. The remaining 27 percent of infants and toddlers are cared for by a parent while their mother is working.

Infants and toddlers of working mothers spend an average of 25 hours a week with nonparental providers. Thirty-nine percent (two out of five young children) are in full-time care. Further, it appears that children in centers and family care arrangements are there for longer hours on average than are children being cared for by relatives. Specifically, the average hours per week in care for children in centers and family child care are 33 and 32 hours, respectively, while children with relatives spend only an average of 26 hours per week in care.

One out of three (34 percent) infants and toddlers of working mothers are in two or more arrangements.

Figure 1 *Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers*



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

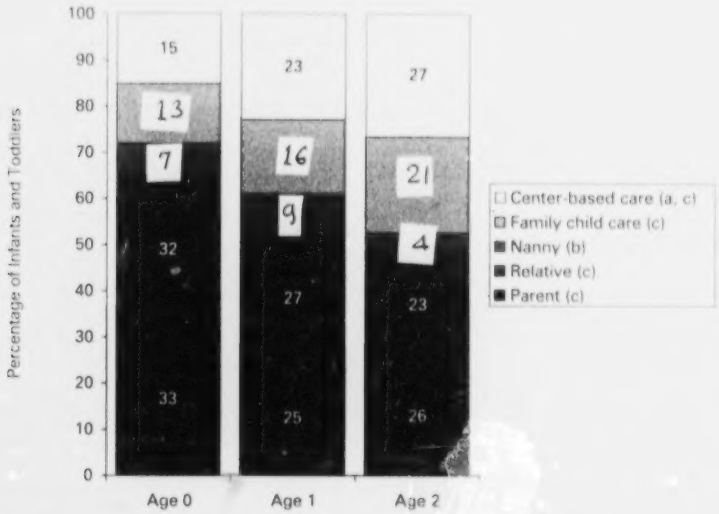
Care and the Age of the Child

Dramatic developmental changes occur for children between birth and age 2. In just these few years, children learn to roll over, to sit up, to crawl, and then to walk and talk. Their social interactions move from focusing primarily on their parents to developing relationships with other children. Not surprisingly, therefore, parents are likely to make different child care choices as their children move through these stages (Hofferth et al. 1991; Hofferth et al. 1998).

Types of Care

The youngest children are more often cared for by family members and in smaller, home-based settings, but as children reach the toddler stage, employed parents begin to use more formal settings, such as centers, for their children. Specifically, center care increases for young children between infancy and age 2. Fifteen percent of children under age 1 are in center care, compared with 23 percent of children age 1 and 27 percent of children age 2 (table A3).[9] Percentages of young children in family child care increase with age as well, with 13 percent of children under age 1 and 21 percent of 2-year-olds in this arrangement. Conversely, relative and nanny/baby-sitter care are more common among younger children. Thirty-two percent of children under 1, 27 percent of 1-year-olds, and 23 percent of 2-year-olds are cared for by relatives (figure 2). Similarly, use of nanny and baby-sitter care declines significantly for children between the ages of 1 and 2 (9 versus 4 percent). And care by a parent while the mother is working is more common for children under 1, compared with children age 2. Thus, many children begin life in the care of family members but appear to transition into more formal arrangements as they grow older, though a significant minority of even the youngest children are in center care.

Figure 2 *Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers, by Child's Age*



Source: Urban Institute calculations.

Note: Statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level are noted for the following comparisons of estimates: a = children under age 1 and age 1, b = children age 1 and age 2, c = children under age 1 and age 2.

Hours in Care

As young children get older, they spend more hours in nonparental care. The percentage of children in full-time care (35 hours or more each week) jumps from 32 percent for children under 1 to 43 percent of 2-year-olds.

Number of Arrangements

As infants and toddlers get older and are cared for in more formal settings and for longer hours, they also are placed in more arrangements. Specifically, 28 percent of children under 1, compared with 38 percent of 2-year-olds, spent time in two or more nonparental arrangements.

Care and the Race/Ethnicity of the Child

Research suggests that race and ethnic background may play a role in the choices families make about child care (Fuller, Holloway, and Liang 1996), and the data below confirm these findings for young children. It is important to remember, though, that racial and ethnic backgrounds are also closely associated with other differences—family structure and composition, employment patterns, language and cultural patterns, income differences, and so forth—all of which may play a role in how different racial and ethnic groups make decisions about child care. The report provides data for children in three racial and ethnic groups: black non-Hispanic, white non-Hispanic, and Hispanic. It refers to these groups as black, white, and Hispanic. Sample sizes for other racial and ethnic groups, such as Asian and American Indian children, are too small to produce findings about those groups.

Types of Care

There are some differences in the types of child care used by different racial/ethnic groups. For instance, nearly one out of three (30 percent) black children and one in four (24 percent) white children are cared for in centers, compared with one in ten (10 percent) Hispanic children (table A4; figure 3). Nanny or baby-sitter care is more commonly used for white children (8 percent) than for black children (3 percent). Hispanic families most often rely on relatives. Thirty-nine percent of Hispanic children are placed in relative care, compared with 25 percent of white children and 27 percent of black children. The percentages of children in parent care while the mother works, however, do not differ significantly for the three racial/ethnic groups.

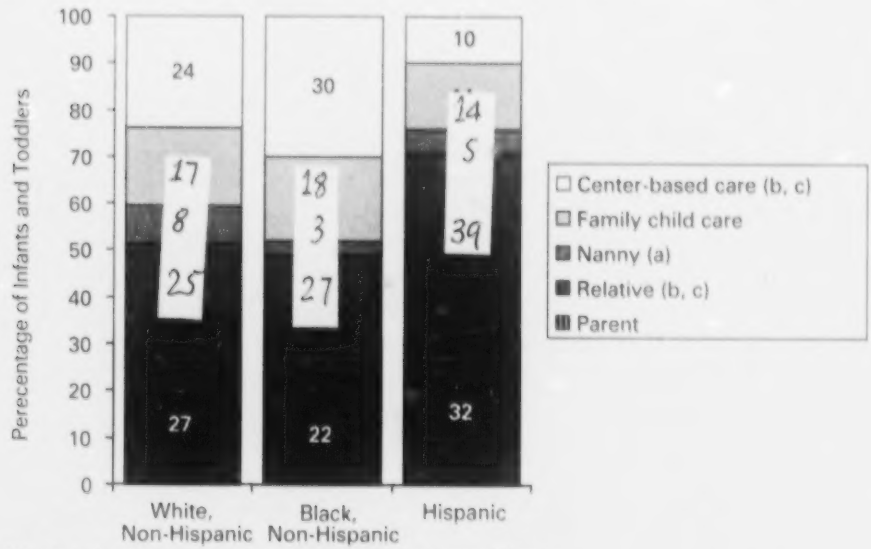
Hours in Care

The amount of time young children spend in nonparental care also varies substantially, depending on the child's race/ethnicity. Well over half (58 percent) of black infants and toddlers of employed mothers are in care full-time, compared with a little more than a third of white (36 percent) and Hispanic (34 percent) children (figure 4).

Number of Arrangements

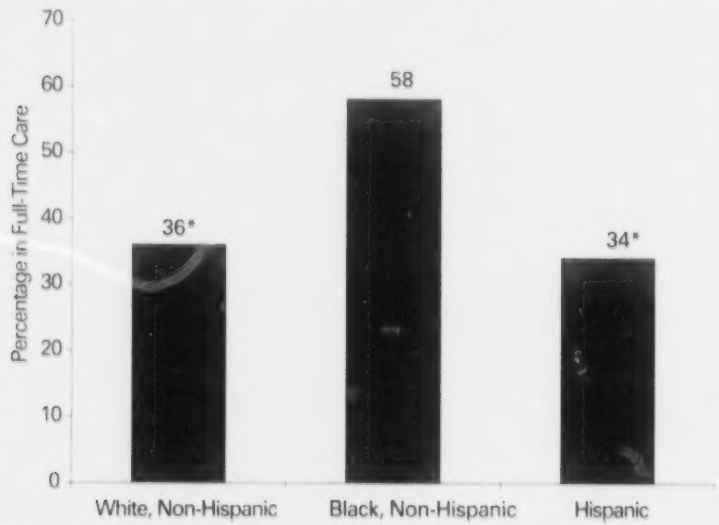
The number of nonparental arrangements used by infants and toddlers does not differ by race/ethnicity; approximately one-third of young children in all groups are in two or more arrangements.

Figure 3 *Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers, by Child's Race/Ethnicity*



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
Note: Statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level are noted for the following comparisons of estimates: a = white and black children, b = white and Hispanic children, c = Hispanic and black children.

Figure 4 *Use of Full-Time Care among Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers, by Child's Race/Ethnicity*



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
*The percentage differs from the percentage of black, non-Hispanic children in full-time care at the 0.05 level.

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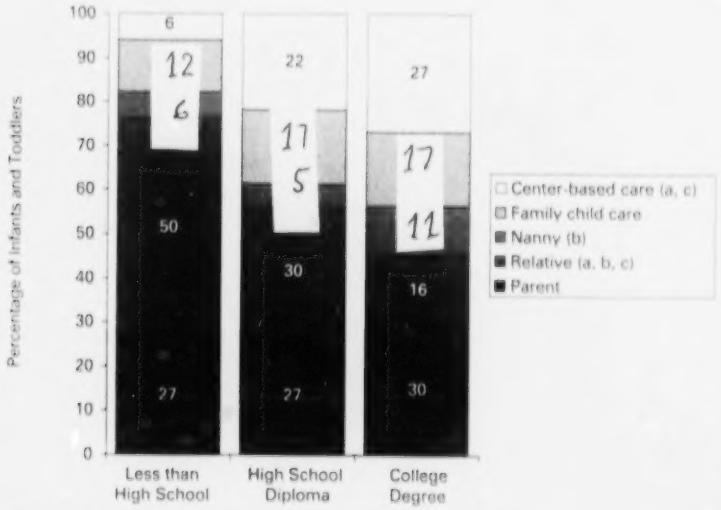
Care and the Mother's Level of Education

Maternal education levels are related to child care patterns and the use of non-parental care (Leibowitz, Waite, and Witsberger 1988). Clear patterns in the NSAF show this relationship, though it is important to recognize that maternal education is also closely associated with other factors—such as income and employment patterns—that can play a strong role in affecting child care choices.

Types of Care

Some primary care arrangements for infants and toddlers differ in the NSAF depending on the education of the mother (figure 5). For example, center care is more common among children of more educated mothers. The percentage of young children in center care increases from 6 percent of children with mothers who have less than a high school diploma to 27 percent of children whose mothers have a college degree (table A5). Nanny or baby-sitter care is also more common among children of more educated mothers. Specifically, care by nannies or baby-sitters increases from 5 percent of children whose mothers have a high school diploma to 11 percent of children whose mothers have a college degree. Relative care is much less common among young children of more educated mothers; the proportion of children in relative care decreases from 50 percent of children whose mothers have less than a high school diploma to 30 percent of children whose mothers have a high school diploma to 16 percent of children of mothers with a college degree. The use of parent care while the mother works does not differ depending on education; one-fourth to one-third of infants and toddlers in each maternal education category are cared for by a parent.

Figure 5 *Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers, by Mother's Education*



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
Note: Statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level are noted for the following comparisons of estimates: a = children of mothers with less than a high school diploma and a high school diploma, b = children of mothers with a high school diploma and a college degree, c = children of mothers with less than a high school diploma and a college degree.

Hours in Care

The average number of hours young children spend in care each week does not differ depending on the education of the mother. Infants and toddlers of mothers without a high school diploma spend 23 hours in care, compared with 25 hours a week for children of mothers with a high school diploma and 24 hours a week for children of mothers with a college degree.

Number of Arrangements

The number of arrangements young children are in, however, does differ depending on the mother's education. A little more than one-third of children of parents with a high school diploma (35 percent) or college degree (34 percent) are in two or more child care arrangements, compared with only about one-fifth (21 percent) of children of parents with less than a high school diploma.

Care and Family Income[10]

Family income levels are likely to be related to a family's choice of child care for a number of reasons, including, at the most basic level, whether the family can afford certain options or whether it is eligible for subsidies to help defray the cost. Income is also closely related to other important factors that can affect child care choices, though, such as employment patterns and family structure.

Findings in this paper as well as past research do suggest that family income plays a role in the type of care used by families (Phillips et al. 1994). The paper looks at care patterns for three income groups: *poor* families (incomes below 100 percent of the federal poverty level [FPL]), *low-income* families (incomes between 100 and 200 percent of FPL), and *higher-income* families (with incomes above 200 percent of FPL).[11]

Types of Care

Some types of primary care arrangements used for young children differ depending on the family's income, though the patterns are somewhat complex. For example, center care appears to be used more commonly for the children of higher-income families (25 percent) than for children from low-income families (16 percent) (table A6; figure 6). Similarly, nanny or baby-sitter care is most common among children of higher-income families (8 percent) and least common for children of poor families (1 percent). Low-income families have the highest percentage (39 percent) of children in relative care, followed by 28 percent of children from poor families and 23 percent of children from higher-income families.

While it is difficult to summarize these patterns, in general they indicate that the infants and toddlers of poor and low-income families are more likely to be in relative care than in other arrangements. Children from higher-income families are somewhat more likely to be in center-based care, though a significant proportion of these children are in less formal arrangements as well.

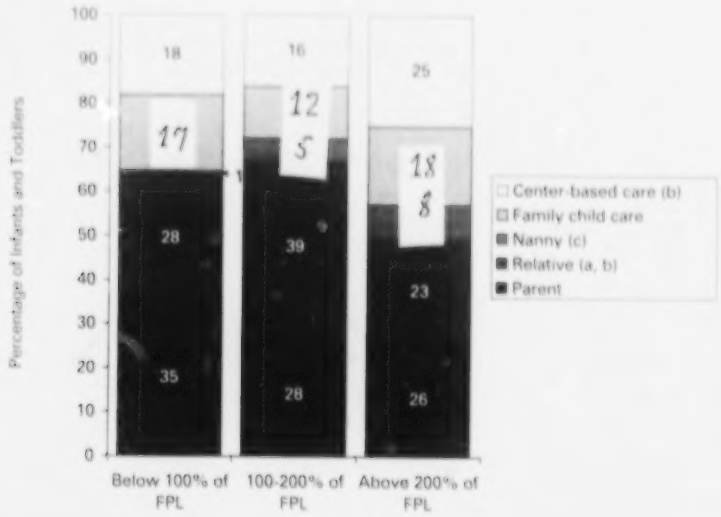
Hours in Care

Patterns are somewhat less complicated when considering the hours children spend in care. Infants and toddlers spend more time in nonparental care as family income increases. Young children in poor families spend an average of 21 hours a week in care; children in higher-income families spend 26 hours.

Number of Arrangements

The number of arrangements infants and toddlers are in appears to increase with income, though this increase is not statistically significant.

Figure 6 *Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers, by Family Income*

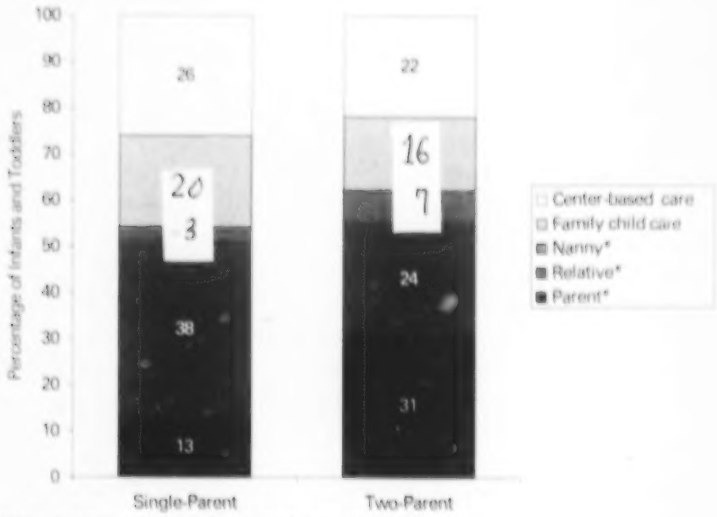


Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
FPL = Federal Poverty Level.
Note: Statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level are noted for the following comparisons of estimates: a = below 100 percent and 100–200 percent of FPL, b = 100–200 percent of FPL and above 200 percent of FPL, c = below 100 percent and above 200 percent of FPL.

Care and Family Structure

Use of child care is likely to be affected by whether families have one or two parents in the household. For example, two-parent families generally have access to more adult help than single-parent families (because they have an additional parent who is able to provide parent care), and they are able to earn more income, which makes child care options more numerous. Single parents, in contrast, must juggle caretaking with providing income to support their families. And given that a single parent frequently is the only earner, single parents are often poor, which may constrain their child care choices. The NSAF does show differences in the child care patterns of single-parent and two-parent families. Furthermore, income and family structure are closely associated—in that single-parent families are likely to have less income than two-parent families. Therefore

Figure 7 *Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers, by Family Structure*



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
*Percentages differ at the 0.05 level.

the paper also looks at differences for these two groups by income status, specifically above and below 200 percent of FPL.

Types of Care

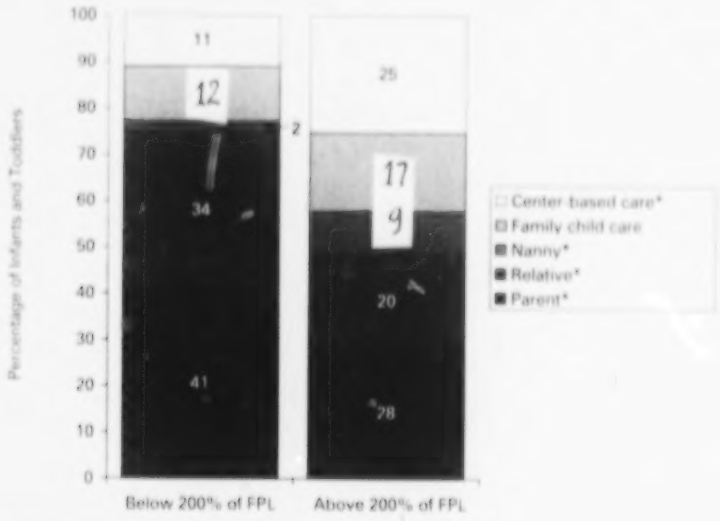
Single- and two-parent families use center-based care (26 and 22 percent, respectively) and family child care (20 and 16 percent, respectively) at similar levels (table A7; figure 7). But single parents are more likely than two parents to rely on relatives. Thirty-eight percent of children in single-parent families are cared for primarily by a relative, compared with only 24 percent of children in two-parent families. Nanny or baby-sitter care, however, is less commonly used by single-parent families (3 percent) than by two-parent families (7 percent). And, not surprisingly, single parents are less likely than two-parent families to rely on parent care. Specifically, only 13 percent of children of single parents are in parent care, compared with 31 percent of children in two-parent families.

There are relatively few differences by income in the child care arrangements chosen by single-parent families. Income differences are more dramatic for two-parent families (figure 8). Specifically, when compared with higher-income two-parent families, low-income two-parent families are much less likely to rely on center care (11 versus 25 percent) and nanny care (2 versus 9 percent) and more likely to rely on relative care (34 versus 20 percent) and parent care (41 versus 28 percent) (table A8).

Hours in Care

Young children of single parents spend significantly more time in nonparental care than young children of two-parent families. On average, infants and toddlers of single parents spend 34 hours a week in nonparental care, and children of two par-

Figure 8 *Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers in Two-Parent Families, by Family Income*



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
FPL = Federal Poverty Level.
*Percentages differ at the 0.05 level.

cents spend 23 hours. Moreover, 60 percent of the young children of single parents are in care full-time, compared with only 34 percent of children of two-parent families.

Significantly more children of two-parent families are in care full-time when family income is above 200 percent of FPL. Twenty-four percent of children of low-income two-parent families are in care full-time, compared with 37 percent of children of higher-income two-parent families. Similarly, average hours in nonparental care for children in two-parent families are 17 hours for families below 200 percent of FPL and 25 hours for those above 200 percent of FPL.

Number of Arrangements

The number of nonparental arrangements does not differ by family structure. About one-third of infants and toddlers in both single-parent (34 percent) and two-parent (34 percent) families are in two or more nonparental arrangements. The number of arrangements used by two-parent families does differ, though, depending on income. Only 27 percent of young children in low-income two-parent families are in multiple arrangements, compared with 36 percent of children from higher-income two-parent families. This finding is congruent with the higher reliance on parent care in the low-income two-parent families—these families are less likely to rely on additional nonparental care arrangements.

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Care and Parent Availability

The amount of time that working parents are "available" to care for their children is affected not only by their family structure—specifically, whether there are one or two parents in the household—but also by their hours of work (Smith and Casper 1999). To look at this issue and the impact it has on the child care patterns of infants and toddlers, this paper combines information from the NSAF on parental employment and family structure into a measure of "parental availability" for child care. Categories are ordered as follows, from those in which the parents have the least amount of time available to provide child care to those in which they have the most time:

- Single parent working full-time
- Two parents working full-time
- Single parent working part-time
- "Partially employed" parents (two parents, with one parent not working, or one or both parents working part-time)

These findings are not measures of the quality of the parent-child interaction or the emotional availability of the parent to the child; they refer only to the extent to which a parent is likely to be physically present to provide care, given work and family structure patterns. Also, as in the rest of the paper, the data presented here are only for children of employed mothers. Families in which the mother (MKA) is not employed and the spouse is employed would meet the definition of "partial employment," but they are not included because they are not in the group studied in this paper.

Types of Care

Primary care arrangements for infants and toddlers differ by parental availability. Use of center and family child care is more common among parents with less time available. Use of center care decreases from 26 percent for children with one parent working full-time to 13 percent for children of two-parent, partially employed families (table A9). Similarly, the use of family care declined from 24 to 10 percent, respectively, for these groups. The use of relative care also varied, though the patterns appear to be primarily driven by differences in family structure rather than work patterns; for example, the proportion of children cared for by relatives is higher in single-parent families than in two-parent families, regardless of whether the parents are employed full-time or part-time. Finally, not surprisingly, reliance on parent care while the mother works increases steadily as parents become more available. Just 10 percent of children with one parent working full-time are cared for by a parent, while 44 percent of children in two-parent, partially employed families are in parent care as their primary arrangement.

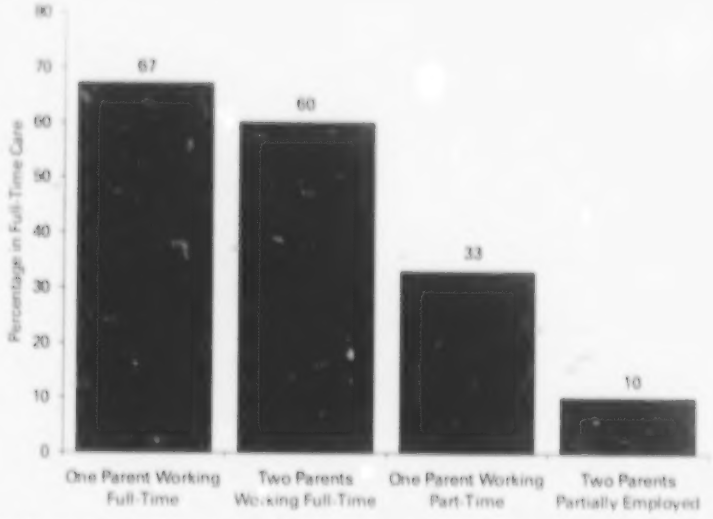
Hours in Care

As parent availability increases, the number of hours in nonparental care and the use of full-time care decline dramatically. Young children of single parents working full-time, the least available parents, spend an average of 35 hours a week in nonparental care, and 67 percent are in care full-time (figure 9). In contrast, children of two-parent, partially employed families—the most available parents—spend an average of 13 hours a week in nonparental care, and only 10 percent are in care full-time.

Number of Arrangements

It is notable that the number of arrangements does not differ by parental availability. About a third of infants and toddlers in all parent availability categories spend time in two or more nonparental arrangements.

Figure 9 *Use of Full-Time Care among Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers, by Parent Availability*



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
Note: All percentages differ from each other at the 0.05 level, with the exception of the comparison between the percentage of children living with one parent working full-time (67 percent) and two parents working full-time (60 percent).

Special Focus: Relative Care for Infants and Toddlers

Because more than a quarter of all infants and toddlers of employed mothers are being cared for primarily by a relative while their mother works, this special focus section looks in greater depth at these arrangements. Relative care is also of increasing interest to policymakers because states have been required since 1988 to provide public child care subsidy funds to help families pay for less formal child care arrangements (such as relative care), making these arrangements a larger portion of the subsidized caseload.

The NSAF provides a unique opportunity to examine three key aspects of these arrangements.

- One aspect is the extent to which infants and toddlers in such settings are being cared for with at least one additional child in what could be termed ***multichild settings***. This issue is important because some research suggests that these settings may not be ideal for promoting very young children's development (NICHD 1996). Infants and toddlers require a high degree of supervision, and the ability of a caretaker to provide this level of supervision, much less necessary levels of stimulation and nurturing, may be more limited with additional children.
- The second aspect is the proportion of infants and toddlers in relative settings where the caretaker/relative is age 18 or older. A younger caretaker caring for an infant or toddler on a regular basis may not have the skills to care for that child adequately.
- The third aspect is the percentage of children being cared for by a relative caretaker who also lives in the child's household.

This section examines each of these issues for all infants and toddlers in relative care as their primary arrangement and then the extent to which the findings differ depending on where the care takes place (in the child's home or the relative's home) and for both higher-income (above 200 percent of FPL) and lower-income (below 200 percent of FPL) families.

Multichild Settings. About half (51 percent) of infants and toddlers in relative care arrangements are in multichild settings (involving at least one additional child) (table A10). Multichild settings are more common among some groups. For example, 59 percent of young children being cared for in a relative's home are in multichild settings, compared with only 39 percent of children cared for in their own homes.[12] However, when children are cared for in their own homes by relatives, children from lower-income families are more likely to be in multichild settings than are children from higher-income families (49 versus 31 percent).

Adult Caretakers. Almost all (96 percent) children in relative care are cared for by a provider age 18 or older. While the percentage of children cared for by a relative over age 18 would appear higher for children from higher-income families (99 versus 92 percent), the difference is not statistically significant.[13]

Residence of Caretakers. For nearly half (45 percent) of infants and toddlers cared for in their homes by a relative, the relative provider also lives with the family. This share does not vary by the income of the family.

In sum, more than half of infants and toddlers in relative care are being cared for in multichild settings. The percentage of children in these settings increases when children are cared for by relatives outside the home and when lower-income children are cared for by relatives in their own homes. On a positive note, overall, the majority of infants and toddlers in relative care arrangements are cared for by an adult caretaker, and very few are cared for by caretakers under age 18.

Overall Patterns of Care

Some clear patterns emerge from this examination of the child care arrangements for infants and toddlers of employed mothers.

Relatively few families with an employed mother rely primarily on parent care for their infants and toddlers. Only one in four infants and toddlers with employed mothers are being cared for primarily by a parent while the mother works. This is not surprising, given that parent care requires that parents split shifts in order to cover their child's care, or care for their child themselves while they are at work.

Some families, however, are less likely than others to rely on parent care while the mother works.

- Parents are less likely to rely on parent care as their infant gets older. Parent care declines from one-third of children under age 1 (33 percent) to about one-fourth of children age 2 (26 percent).
- Parents are less likely to provide parent care when they have less time available because of their family structure or work schedule. For example, 44 percent of the children of two-parent families with at least one parent working part-time are in parent care, in contrast to only 10 percent of the infants and toddlers of single parents who work full-time and only 16 percent of those who live in two-parent families in which both parents work full-time.

Families vary widely in the types of nonparental care they use for their young children. Some families rely much more on relative care; others rely more on more formal arrangements, such as centers. For example, *relative* care accounts for the care arrangements of about a quarter of all infants and toddlers, yet families with some characteristics seem to be more likely to use relative care than their counterparts.

- Half (50 percent) of the young children of mothers with less than a high school diploma are in relative care, in contrast to 30 percent of children of mothers with a high school diploma and 16 percent of children of mothers with a college degree.
- Nearly two in five (39 percent) of the infants and toddlers of low-income families are in relative care, a higher proportion than among children of poor (28 percent) and higher-income (23 percent) families.
- Nearly two in five (38 percent) infants and toddlers of single parents are in relative care, compared with one in four (24 percent) children of two-parent families.
- Almost two in five (39 percent) of the young children of working Hispanic families are in relative care, a higher proportion than found among black (27 percent) or white (25 percent) children.
- Many children (51 percent) in relative settings are there with additional children. This is more common among children cared for in a relative's home (59 percent) than among children cared for in their own homes by a relative (39 percent).

While *center-based* care accounts for 22 percent of all infant and toddler arrangements, certain kinds of families appear to be more likely to use such care.

- Thirty-one percent of the infants and toddlers of two-parent families in which both parents work full-time are in center-based care, a higher proportion than for two-parent families in which either one parent is not working or one or both parents are working part-time (13 percent).
- Thirty percent of young black children are in center-based care, in contrast to 10 percent of Hispanic children.
- Twenty-five percent of young children from higher-income families (above 200 percent of FPL) are in center-based care, compared with 16 percent from low-income (100 to 200 percent of FPL) families.
- Twenty-seven percent of young children of mothers with a college education are in center-based care, compared with only 6 percent of children of mothers with less than a high school diploma.

These findings suggest that two resources in particular—parental time and financial resources—are relevant to a family's decisions about child care. While there are exceptions, families with fewer financial resources appear to be somewhat more likely to choose free or low-cost options, such as relative care or parent care, and families with more financial resources and/or less parental time are more likely to choose more costly options, such as centers. It is important to realize that child care subsidies for low-income families can play a role here as well, because they provide additional resources to families who may not have sufficient income to pay for child care.

Many infants and toddlers are in care for a significant number of hours each week. Infants and toddlers with working mothers spend an average of 25 hours a week in child care, and two in five (39 percent) are in child care for 35 or more hours each week. But this general pattern masks significant differences in time spent in care across different subgroups; some children are significantly more likely to be in full-time care than others.

- Two-thirds of the children of single parents working full-time (67 percent) and single parents with incomes above 200 percent of FPL (67 percent) are in care full-time, as are 56 percent of the children of lower-income single parents.
- Three in five (60 percent) young children of two-parent families with both parents working full-time are in care full-time.
- The incidence of full-time care among black infants and toddlers (58 percent) is higher than among white (36 percent) and Hispanic (34 percent) children.

Implications

First and foremost, these data suggest that policymakers should continue their focus on the care arrangements of young children, because child care plays such a major role in the lives of millions of American infants and toddlers. In addition, given the importance of the first three years of life for laying the foundation of a child's future development, and the fact that many young children are in nonparental care and are there on a full-time basis, continuing to focus on the quality of care that children receive during this critical period is essential.

Furthermore, these data show that child care is particularly prevalent for many of the families that are a focus of public policy initiatives, such as low-income families and single-parent families. Given that these families are at risk economically (which underscores the importance of supporting their efforts to work) and that their children are at greater risk of school failure (because of poverty and other related issues), access to high-quality, affordable care remains a concern.

Child care for this age group presents some unique challenges to public initiatives, though. These children are more likely than older children to be in the types of care that are least amenable to public policy initiatives—for example, children younger than 3 are more likely to be in the care of relatives (27 percent) than are 3- and 4-year-olds (17 percent) (Capizzano, Adams, and Sonenstein 2000). These settings are not as easily reached through traditional efforts to improve quality, which often focus on training child care teachers, improving compensation, or other strategies that are more easily directed toward child care centers and, to a lesser degree, family child care homes. When these factors are combined with the data showing that many children, particularly low-income children, are being cared for by relatives, the issue of whether and how to support quality in these less formal settings becomes more evident.

Finally, these data suggest that access to resources may play a role in the choices that families make—even though it is impossible to show definitively which choices are driven by preferences versus constraints. To the extent that these choices are driven by constraints, policies such as extended paid leave, subsidies, tax options, and initiatives to expand quality and supply may increase the child care options available to parents.

The findings in this paper can inform the policy debate about the development and care of the nation's youngest children. These data show that nonparental care is the reality for millions of American children with employed mothers. Information about which families are using child care for their youngest children, and to what extent, can provide an important context as policymakers work to understand more about what is happening in young children's lives and to shape policy initiatives to ensure that these children get the care they need.

Appendix—Tables

Table A1 *Characteristics of Children under Age 3 of Employed and Nonemployed Mothers*

	Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers (sample size = 2,588)		Children under Age 3 of Nonemployed Mothers (sample size = 1,761)	
	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error
Child's Age*				
Under 1 Year Old	29	1.6	37	2.2
1 Year Old	32	1.8	24	1.7
2 Years Old	38	1.8	39	2.4
Child's Race*				
White Non-Hispanic	69	1.8	63	2.0
Black Non-Hispanic	14	1.2	13	1.5
Hispanic	13	1.1	19	1.4
Other Non-Hispanic	4	0.8	5	1.1
Family Income as a Percentage of the Federal Poverty Level*				
Below 100 Percent	13	1.1	35	2.0
100 to 200 Percent	21	1.4	24	1.8
Above 200 Percent	66	2.0	41	2.6
Family Structure*				
Single-Parent	20	1.3	23	1.8
Two-Parent	80	1.3	77	1.8
MKA Education*				
Less Than H.S. Diploma	7	0.7	20	1.7
H.S. Diploma	64	1.6	62	2.5
College Degree	29	1.6	18	2.0

Source: Data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF).

MKA = most knowledgeable adult.

Notes: Information on children in the NSAF was obtained from the parent or guardian in the household most knowledgeable of the child's education and health care. Because this respondent was the mother for 72 percent of the children, the term "mother" is used to refer to this respondent.

*A chi-square test shows that the distribution of children into categories on the noted sociodemographic characteristic differs for children of employed and nonemployed mothers at the 0.05 level.

Table A2 *Primary Child Care Arrangements, Hours in Care, and Numbers of Nonparental Arrangements for Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers*

	Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers (sample size = 2,588)	
	Estimate	Standard Error
Primary Child Care Arrangement		
Center-based care	22%	1.6
Mean hours in care per week[a]	33 hours	1.0
Family child care	17%	1.5
Mean hours in care per week[b]	32 hours	1.6
Nanny or baby-sitter	7%	0.9
Mean hours in care per week	23 hours	2.4
Relative	27%	1.5
Mean hours in care per week	26 hours	1.1
Parent	27%	2.0
Hours in Child Care		
Full-time (35 or more hours per week)	39%	2.1
Mean hours in care per week	25 hours	0.9
Two or More Nonparental Child Care Arrangements	34%	2.0

Source: Data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Notes: Information on children in the NSAF was obtained from the parent or guardian in the household most knowledgeable of the child's education and health care. Because this respondent was the mother for 72 percent of the children, the term "mother" is used to refer to this respondent.

The sample used to produce the estimate for the percentage of children in care full-time includes a category of children in zero hours of nonparental care. For the mean hours in care, the children in zero hours of nonparental care are not included in the sample.

a. The mean hours for children in center-based care differ from the mean hours of children in relative care at the 0.05 level.

b. The mean hours for children in family child care differ from the mean hours of children in relative care at the 0.05 level.

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Table A3 *Primary Child Care Arrangements, Hours in Care, and Numbers of Nonparental Arrangements for Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers, by Child's Age*

	Under Age 1 (sample size = 758)		Age 1 (sample size = 817)		Age 2 (sample size = 1,013)	
	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error
Primary Care Arrangement						
Center-based care[a]	15%	2.8	23%	2.9	27%	2.8
Family child care[a]	13%	2.0	16%	2.5	21%	2.5
Nanny or baby-sitter[a]	7%	1.6	9%	1.9	4%	1.1
Relative[a]	32%	2.8	27%	3.1	23%	2.1
Parent[a]	33%	2.8	25%	3.4	26%	2.7
Hours in Care						
Full-time (35 or more hours per week)[b]	32%	3.6	40%	3.0	43%	3.2
Mean hours in care per week	22 hours	1.3	26 hours	1.4	26 hours	1.5
Two or More Nonparental Arrangements[c]	28%	3.3	32%	3.2	38%	3.6

Source: Data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Notes: Information on children in the NSAF was obtained from the parent or guardian in the household most knowledgeable of the child's education and health care. Because this respondent was the mother for 72 percent of the children, the term "mother" is used to refer to this respondent.

Based on t-tests, statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level are noted for the following comparisons of estimates: a = children under 1 and age 1, b = children age 1 and age 2, c = children under age 1 and age 2. These t-tests were conducted only when a global test, such as a chi-square test of distributions or an ANOVA (analysis of variance) for means, first indicated that a relationship existed between the child's age and the particular aspect of child care use being analyzed.

The sample used to produce the estimate for the percentage of children in care full-time includes a category of children in zero hours of nonparental care. For the mean hours in care, the children in zero hours of nonparental care are not included in the sample.

Table A4 *Primary Child Care Arrangements, Hours in Care, and Numbers of Nonparental Arrangements for Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers, by Child's Race/Ethnicity*

	White Non-Hispanic (sample size = 1,799)		Black Non-Hispanic (sample size = 407)		Hispanic (sample size = 315)	
	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error
Primary Care Arrangement						
Center-based care[a,b]	24%	1.8	30%	5.2	10%	3.1
Family child care	17%	1.9	18%	4.0	14%	2.9
Nanny[a]	8%	1.1	3%	1.7	5%	1.9
Relative[a]	25%	1.9	27%	4.0	39%	4.2
Parent	27%	2.1	22%	5.5	32%	4.3
Hours in Care						
Full-time (35 hours or more per week)[a]	36%	2.1	58%	5.7	34%	3.9
Mean hours in care per week	24 hours	0.9	31 hours	2.9	23 hours	1.9
Two or More Nonparental Arrangements	33%	2.8	34%	5.9	34%	4.5

Source: Data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Notes: Information on children in the NSAF was obtained from the parent or guardian in the household most knowledgeable of the child's education and health care. Because this respondent was the mother for 72 percent of the children, the term "mother" is used to refer to this respondent.

Because of small sample sizes for other racial and ethnic groups, such as Asian and American Indian children, the table does not include findings for those groups.

Based on t-tests, statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level are noted for the following comparisons of estimates: a = white and black children, b = white and Hispanic children, c = Hispanic and black children. These t-tests were conducted only when a global test, such as a chi-square test of distributions or an ANOVA (analysis of variance) for means, first indicated that a relationship existed between the child's race/ethnicity and the particular aspect of child care use being analyzed.

The sample used to produce the estimate for the percentage of children in care full-time includes a category of children in zero hours of nonparental care. For the mean hours in care, the children in zero hours of nonparental care are not included in the sample.

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Table A5 *Primary Child Care Arrangements, Hours in Care, and Numbers of Nonparental Arrangements for Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers, by Mother's Education*

	Less Than a High School Diploma (sample size = 241)		High School Diploma (sample size = 1,712)		College Degree (sample size = 635)	
	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error
Primary Care Arrangement						
Center-based care[a]	6%	1.8	22%	2.1	27%	3.7
Family child care	12%	2.9	17%	2.2	17%	3.1
Nanny[c]	6%	2.4	5%	1.1	11%	2.1
Relative[b,c]	50%	4.0	30%	2.1	16%	2.5
Parent	27%	4.0	27%	2.1	30%	3.5
Hours in Care						
Full-time (35 or more hours per week)	33%	4.1	40%	2.5	39%	3.6
Mean hours in care per week	23 hours	2.2	25 hours	1.1	24 hours	1.3
Two or More Nonparental Arrangements[c]	21%	5.0	35%	2.8	34%	3.9

Source: Data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Notes: Information on children in the NSAF was obtained from the parent or guardian in the household most knowledgeable of the child's education and health care. Because this respondent was the mother for 72 percent of the children, the term "mother" is used to refer to this respondent.

Based on t-tests, statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level are noted for the following comparisons of estimates: a = less than high school diploma and high school diploma; b = high school diploma and college degree; c = less than high school diploma and college degree. These t-tests were conducted only when a global test, such as a chi-square test of distributions or an ANOVA (analysis of variance) for means, first indicated that a relationship existed between the mother's education and the particular aspect of child care use being analyzed.

The sample used to produce the estimate for the percentage of children in care full-time includes a category of children in zero hours of nonparental care. For the mean hours in care, the children in zero hours of nonparental care are not included in the sample.

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Table A6 *Primary Child Care Arrangements, Hours in Care, and Numbers of Nonparental Arrangements for Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers, by Family Income*

	Below 100% of FPL (sample size = 459)		100 to 200% of FPL (sample size = 746)		Above 200% of FPL (sample size = 1,383)	
	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error
Primary Care Arrangement						
Center-based care[a]	18	3.9	16	2.6	25	2.4
Family child care	17	3.5	12	2.2	18	2.2
Nanny	1	1.1	5	1.5	8	1.2
Relative[a,b]	28	3.9	39	3.3	23	1.9
Parent	35	3.7	28	2.6	26	2.8
Hours in Care						
Full-time (35 or more hours per week)	34	3.7	37	3.0	41	2.8
Mean hours in care per week[c]	21	1.7	23	1.1	26	1.2
Two or More Nonparental Arrangements	26	4.3	31	3.0	36	2.7

Source: Data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

FPL = federal poverty level.

Notes: Information on children in the NSAF was obtained from the parent or guardian in the household most knowledgeable of the child's education and health care. Because this respondent was the mother for 72 percent of the children, the term "mother" is used to refer to this respondent.

Based on t-tests, statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level are noted for the following comparisons of estimates: a = under 100 percent and 100 to 200 percent of FPL, b = 100 to 200 percent of FPL and over 200 percent of FPL, c = less than 100 percent and more than 200 percent of FPL. These t-tests were conducted only when a global test, such as a chi-square test of distributions or an ANOVA (analysis of variance) for means, first indicated that a relationship existed between family income and the particular aspect of child care use being analyzed.

The sample used to produce the estimate for the percentage of children in care full-time includes a category of children in zero hours of nonparental care. For the mean hours in care, the children in zero hours of nonparental care are not included in the sample.

Table A7 *Primary Child Care Arrangements, Hours in Care, and Numbers of Nonparental Arrangements for Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers, by Family Structure*

	Single-Parent Families (sample size = 652)		Two-Parent Families (sample size = 1,874)	
	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error
Primary Care Arrangement				
Center-based care	26%	3.2	22%	1.9
Family child care	20%	3.0	16%	1.9
Nanny*	3%	1.2	7%	1.0
Relative*	38%	3.5	24%	1.7
Parent*	13%	1.8	31%	2.4
Hours in Care				
Full-time (35 or more hours per week)*	60%	4.0	34%	2.3
Mean hours in care per week*	34 hours	1.9	23 hours	1.0
Two or More Nonparental Arrangements	34%	4.2	34%	2.4

Source: Data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Notes: Information on children in the NSAF was obtained from the parent or guardian in the household most knowledgeable of the child's education and health care. Because this respondent was the mother for 72 percent of the children, the term "mother" is used to refer to this respondent.

Children from families without a biological, adoptive, or stepparent present were excluded from this analysis.

The sample used to produce the estimate for the percentage of children in care full-time includes a category of children in zero hours of nonparental care. For the mean hours in care, the children in zero hours of nonparental care are not included in the sample.

* A t-test shows that the two percentages or means differ at the 0.05 level.

Table A8 *Primary Child Care Arrangements, Hours in Care, and Numbers of Nonparental Arrangements for Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers, by Family Structure and Income*

	Single-Parent Families				Two-Parent Families			
	Below 200% of FPL (sample size = 495)		Above 200% of FPL (sample size = 157)		Below 200% of FPL (sample size = 668)		Above 200% of FPL (sample size = 1,206)	
	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error
Primary Care Arrangement								
Center-based care*	27%	4.0	25%	6.7	11%	2.0	25%	2.5
Family child care	18%	2.8	24%	7.7	12%	2.5	17%	2.4
Nanny*	4%	1.8	1%	0.5	2%	1.0	9%	1.3
Relative*	37%	4.0	40%	7.7	34%	3.3	20%	2.0
Parent*	14%	1.7	11%	3.8	41%	3.4	28%	3.1
Hours in Care								
Full-time (35 or more hours per week)*	40%	4.2	67%	7.1	24%	2.8	37%	2.8
Mean hours in care per week*	31 hours	1.5	37 hours	4.1	17 hours	1.3	25 hours	1.2
Two or More Nonparental Arrangements*	33%	4.3	35%	8.7	27%	3.3	36%	2.8

Source: Data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

FPL = federal poverty level.

Notes: Information on children in the NSAF was obtained from the parent or guardian in the household most knowledgeable of the child's education and health care. Because this respondent was the mother for 72 percent of the children, the term "mother" is used to refer to this respondent.

Children from families without a biological, adoptive, or stepparent present were excluded from this analysis.

The sample used to produce the estimate for the percentage of children in care full time includes a category of children in zero hours of nonparental care. For the mean hours in care, the children in zero hours of nonparental care are not included in the sample.

*Based on t-tests, statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level are noted for two-parent families above and below 200 percent of FPL.

Table A9 *Primary Child Care Arrangements, Hours in Care, and Numbers of Nonparental Arrangements for Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers, by Parent Availability*

	One Parent Working Full-Time (sample size = 476)		Two Parents Working Full-Time (sample size = 890)		One Parent Working Part-Time (sample size = 178)		Two Parents Partially Employed (sample size = 1,044)	
	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error
Primary Care Arrangement								
Center-based care[a,b,c,d]	26%	4.1	31%	3.3	22%	6.3	13%	2.1
Family child care[a,b,c,d]	24%	3.8	22%	2.8	6%	1.8	10%	2.1
Nanny or baby-sitter[a]	3%	1.2	6%	1.2	4%	3.3	9%	1.6
Relative[a,b,c,d]	36%	4.2	25%	2.7	43%	5.3	23%	2.4
Parent[a,b,c,d]	10%	2.0	16%	2.3	26%	4.3	44%	3.5
Hours in Care								
Full-time (35 or more hours per week)[a,b,c,d]	67%	4.6	60%	3.3	33%	5.0	10%	2.1
Mean hours in care per week[a,b,c,d]	35 hours	2.3	33 hours	1.3	25 hours	2.1	13 hours	1.1
Two or More Nonparental Arrangements	32%	4.7	33%	2.9	42%	7.6	35%	3.5

Source: Data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Notes: Information on children in the NSAF was obtained from the parent or guardian in the household most knowledgeable of the child's education and health care. Because this respondent was the mother for 72 percent of the children, the term "mother" is used to refer to this respondent.

Two-parent partially employed families include families where at least one parent is not working full-time. Specifically, either one parent is not working, or one or both parents are working part-time.

Families where the mother (MKA) is not employed would meet the definition of "partial employment" but are not included because they are not in the group studied in this paper.

Based on t-tests, statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level are noted for the following comparisons of estimates: a = one parent working full-time and two parents working full-time, b = two parents working full-time and one parent working part-time, c = one parent working part-time and two parents partially employed, d = two parents working full-time and two parents partially employed, e = one parent working full-time and one parent working part-time, and f = one parent working full-time and two parents partially employed. These t-tests were conducted only when a global test, such as a chi-square test of distributions or an ANOVA (analysis of variance) for means, first indicated that a relationship existed between parent availability and the particular aspect of child care use being analyzed.

The sample used to produce the estimate for the percentage of children in care full-time includes a category of children in zero hours of nonparental care. For the mean hours in care, the children in zero hours of nonparental care are not included in the sample.

Table A10 *Characteristics of Relative Child Care for Children under Age 3 of Employed Mothers*

Relative Care—Baseline

	Relative Care (sample size = 781)	
	Estimate (%)	Standard Error
Child cared for in a multichild setting	51	3.2
Caretaker is age 18 or older	96	1.8

Comparing All Relative Care, by Income

	Below 200% of FPL (sample size = 416)		Above 200% of FPL (sample size = 365)	
	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error
Child cared for in a multichild setting	58	5.1	46	4.5
Caretaker is age 18 or older	92	3.7	99	0.6

Comparing Relative Care in the Child's Home, by Income

	Below 200% of FPL (sample size = 181)		Above 200% of FPL (sample size = 156)	
	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error
Child cared for in a multichild setting*	49	6.2	31	5.9
Caretaker is age 18 or older	88	5.0	98	1.8
Caretaker lives in child's home	46	7.7	45	7.0

Comparing Relative Care in the Relative's Home, by Income

	Below 200% of FPL (sample size = 235)		Above 200% of FPL (sample size = 209)	
	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error
Child cared for in a multichild setting	64	6.4	55	5.9
Caretaker is age 18 or older	94	4.9	100	0.0

Comparing Relative Care in the Child's Home and in the Relative's Home

	Care in the Child's Home (sample size = 337)		Care in the Relative's Home (sample size = 444)	
	Estimate (%)	Standard Error	Estimate (%)	Standard Error
Child cared for in a multichild setting*	39	4.4	59	4.2
Caretaker is age 18 or older	94	2.6	97	2.3
Caretaker lives in child's home	45	5.1	N/A	N/A

Source: Data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

FPL = federal poverty level; N/A = not applicable.

Notes: Information on children in the NSAF was obtained from the parent or guardian in the household most knowledgeable of the child's education and health care. Because this respondent was the mother for 72 percent of the children, the term "mother" is used to refer to this respondent.

*A t-test shows the two percentages differ at the .05 level.

Notes

1. Some states had such requirements in place before the 1996 welfare reform legislation. However, other states exempt mothers of infants and young children from these requirements.

2. The National Survey of America's Families collected data on the economic, health, and social characteristics of 44,461 households, yielding a sample of more than 100,000 people, representative of the civilian, noninstitutionalized population under 65. Data were obtained on one or two respondent adults, the respondent's spouse or partner, and up to two focal children for each household. Representative samples of households were collected in 13 focus states plus the balance of the nation. The focus states are Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. The survey oversamples households with low incomes, defined as below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

3. Information on the children in the NSAF was obtained from the parent or guardian in the household most knowledgeable about the child's education and health care. For 72 percent of the children, this respondent—labeled the "most knowledgeable adult" (MKA)—was the mother, so the term "mother" is used throughout to refer to this respondent.

4. The mother was asked if she was working, looking for work, or in school during any of the hours that the child was cared for in the primary care arrangement. In general, that arrangement is the form of care used for the most hours while the mother works, but in some cases mothers may also use the primary care arrangement during their nonworking hours.

5. If the respondent did not report an arrangement, the child is assumed to be in parent care. Parent care may include care provided by the other parent, the mother caring for the child while she works, or care for the child at home by a self-employed mother. The authors are confident that this measure captures parental arrangements because the share (24 percent) of children under 5 of employed parents with parental care as the primary arrangement in the NSAF (Capizzano, Adams, and Sonenstein 2000) is the same as the share (24 percent) of preschoolers in the 1994 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) who were cared for primarily by their mother at work or their father while their mother was working (Casper 1997).

6. The sample used to produce the estimate for the percentage of children in care full-time includes a category of children in zero hours of nonparental care. When calculating the mean hours in care, the children in zero hours of nonparental care are not included in the sample.

7. To capture child care arrangements, mothers were asked if the child attended any of three separate categories of center-based care: Head Start; a group or day care center, nursery, preschool, or prekindergarten program; or a before- or after-school program. Mothers were also asked about baby-sitting in the home by someone other than them or their spouse and questioned about "child care or baby-sitting in someone else's home." A child can be cared for in two center-based arrangements within the same category (two nursery schools, for example), two different baby-sitters in the child's home, or two different individuals outside the child's home. In these cases, the NSAF captures only one of the arrangements and therefore potentially undercounts the number of arrangements used by the child. These undercounts, however, are small. For example, the NSAF estimate of children in two center-based arrangements is 5 percentage points lower than National Household Education Survey (NHES) estimates, another nationally representative data source. This is also true of NSAF data about the percentage of children regularly cared for by two different relatives, which is 4 percentage points lower than the NHES estimates.

8. From the parent's perspective, coordinating multiple arrangements may add to the complexity of balancing child rearing and work, but it also may provide greater reliability because of the presence of an alternative form of care.

9. Three strategies were used to test whether differences were statistically significant. (1) Overall chi-square tests for each different aspect of care—types, hours, and number of nonparental arrangements—were conducted to determine whether category distributions varied for each set of demographic subgroups being compared—child's age, child's race/ethnicity, mother's education, family income, family structure, and parent availability. (2) For the overall mean hours in care, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test for differences in means between different demographic groups. Where only two demographic groups are being compared, a t-test was used to compare the means. (3) Where the overall chi-square or ANOVA was significant, t-tests were done to compare specific means and percentages. Only findings at the 0.05 level of significance are discussed in the text of this paper.

10. This is the only section of the paper that looks at three income groups. Other discussions of income refer to two income groups: low-income families (below 200 percent of the federal poverty level [FPL]) and higher-income families (above 200 percent of FPL).

11. The 1997 NSAF collected information about the family's income in 1996. In 1996, a family with two parents and two children and income less than $31,822 was classified as living below 200 percent of FPL.

12. The NSAF did ask questions about the number of additional adults providing care when care was not in the child's home. For 39 percent of the infants and toddlers cared for by a relative in the relative's home with at least one other child, an additional adult was available to provide care. This means that some of these children may not be at significant risk if there are enough adults providing care to the larger group of children. Yet nothing is known about the additional adults, their relationships to the provider, and the extent of their caretaking role. A grandmother caring for a grandchild, for example, may report that there is another adult (possibly the grandfather) who helps her care for the child on a regular basis, but the extent of this help is not clear.

13. The paper also looked at this percentage for infants and toddlers in nanny or baby-sitter care, and it is interesting to note that 86 percent (standard error = 5.0) of these children were cared for by a provider over age 18.

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